



## *News Release*

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## **Association of Public Health Laboratories recognizes two Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services employees**

**CLEVELAND, OHIO** \_ The Department of General Services (DGS) today announced that two Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) employees have received prestigious national awards from the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL).

Dr. Lauren Turner received APHL's Emerging Leader Award for her work leading DCLS' foodborne surveillance and advanced molecular detection programs, which have evolved into two of the nation's premier programs and include the important work of sequencing COVID-19 samples to determine variant classification. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) selected the programs run by Dr. Turner as regional resources for next-generation sequencing and bioinformatics.

Crystal Barrett, who leads DCLS' Laboratory Systems Improvement and Training group, received the Thomas E. Maxson Education, Training and Workforce Development Award. She has dedicated over a decade of her career to the development of trainings and consultative leadership to benefit employees and students at all levels at DCLS and across the nation.

Dr. Turner and Barrett received the awards during a ceremony Thursday at APHL's national conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

"It was an honor to celebrate all of the APHL award winners today, and it was no surprise that two deserving recipients were from the Virginia Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS)," said **Scott J. Becker, APHL's chief executive officer**. "The Virginia DCLS team has continued to demonstrate their dedication to protecting the health of Virginians and to supporting the greater public health laboratory community."

“We are so proud of Dr. Lauren Turner and Crystal Barrett and are pleased to see them recognized at such a high level for their work,” said **Joe Damico, Director of the Department of General Services**. “The level of excellence and dedication each has to public health at large, Virginia’s public health and environmental laboratory and our Commonwealth is admirable.”

**Dr. Denise Toney, Director of DCLS**, added: “The reason our state laboratory is known as one of the nation’s best is because of our people, such as Dr. Lauren Turner and Crystal Barrett. Their leadership and vision help us help us achieve amazing things while always considering how we can improve to better serve the public.”

The Emerging Leader Award honors a laboratorian whose leadership has been instrumental in one or more advances in laboratory science, practice, management, policy or education within five to 10 years of working at a publicly funded laboratory.

Dr. Turner began her public health journey as an Emerging Infectious Diseases Postdoctoral Fellow, and throughout her 10-year tenure at DCLS she has been promoted to increasing levels of scientific responsibility and leadership. She and other DCLS scientists established a high-capacity sequencing core laboratory at DCLS focusing on the characterization of infectious pathogens. Dr. Turner was instrumental in expanding DCLS’ sequencing capacity through the creation of a network within Virginia to provide surge sequencing support as was needed for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) variant surveillance.

“Dr. Turner is a highly talented and innovative scientist, taking on the most complex projects and executing them effortlessly in support of health promotion and safety for Virginia’s citizens,” said **Dr. Marilyn Bibbs Freeman, Deputy Director of DCLS**. “She often is sought by our state and federal partners for her expertise, and her feedback frequently has been incorporated into a standard of practice for public health laboratories nationwide.”

The Thomas E. Maxson Education, Training and Workforce Development Award honors an APHL member who has made significant contributions to public health laboratory practice by creating, delivering, or developing continuing educational opportunities, programs, policies or practices for the laboratory community.

Barrett has worked in collaboration with CDC and APHL to identify workforce gaps and develop ways to address those gaps to the benefit of the public health community nationally and for the nearly 300 scientists and support staff at DCLS. She developed novel, customized trainings to help build and maximize the DCLS staff potential in a number of areas. She also provides trainings for external stakeholders, helped create DCLS’ summer internship program and has mentored several Virginia Commonwealth University Capstone projects.

“Crystal has a unique blend of not only laboratory science experience but also a degree in training and education, which allows her to be the best advocate for professional development in the laboratory,” **Dr. Bibbs Freeman** said. “DCLS benefits from her expertise and she helps make our people better, which makes our lab better.”

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